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National NAACP Board Meet in Jackson, Pay Tribute to Medgar Evers

May 14, 2013 – Jackson, MS - The Mississippi State Conference NAACP is proud to announce that the National NAACP Board of Directors will be holding its meeting in Jackson to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the assassination of Medgar Evers.

"The National NAACP board hasn't held a meeting here in Jackson for 30 years," said former Supreme Court Justice Fred L. Banks Jr., who is also chair of the NAACP Legal Committee and the longest serving member of the National NAACP Board, serving since 1981. "This is a tremendous honor for Jackson and the state of Mississippi. It isn't easy to get something this massive here to Jackson."

Public Events include:

Press Conference & Wreath Laying

When: Thursday, May 16, 2013 at 10:00 a.m.
Where: Medgar Evers Home Museum

Tribute Concert featuring MS Mass Choir & MADDRAMA

When: Friday, May 17, 2013 at 7:00 p.m.
Where: M.W. Stringer Grand Lodge

In addition to the performance of the award winning Mississippi Mass Choir, Friday night's tribute concert will also feature special presentations by Mr. Julian Bond and Mrs. Myrlie Evers-Williams.

NAACP member and former U.S. Department of Agriculture Program Manager Shirley Harrington-Watson recalls the difficulty involved in bringing the event to Jackson 30 years ago.

"We wanted to have it here 30 years ago, but they said Jackson was too small. I went to the board three times before I could get them to approve it," said Harrington-Watson, who said she still harbors feelings of guilt over Evers' death in 1963, when he was gunned down in his driveway by segregationist terrorists.

"I felt, as a child, that I was responsible for his death, because I had asked him to get us some t-shirts that night and those t-shirts were actually under his arm. The security people left him and he drove home by himself. (His security) and my uncle would take turns going behind him with guns to make sure he got in and out safely, but that time he chose to go by himself," Harrington-Watson said. "Really, it takes a lot to talk about it still. I'm still a Post Traumatic Stress Disorder sufferer from the undeclared war on blacks in Mississippi."

Evers was an historic figure who helped organize the local movement in Jackson to bring an end to Jim Crow-era laws discriminating against African-Americans. His assassination at the hands of segregationists helped further stoke opposition against state-sponsored segregation in the South. In honor of Evers' noble sacrifice, the NAACP will hold a May 16 wreath-laying ceremony to mark the 50-year anniversary at the Medgar Evers Home Museum at 2332 Margaret W. Alexander Drive, in Jackson.

Attending the event will be Evers' widow and NAACP National Board Member Myrlie Evers-Williams, NAACP National Board of Directors Chair Roslyn M. Brock, NAACP President and CEO Benjamin Todd Jealous, Civil Rights legend and NAACP National Board Member Julian Bond, Tougaloo College President Beverly Wade Hogan and Mississippi NAACP President Derrick Johnson, among others.

The ceremony will be followed by a Civil Rights bus tour of Jackson, which will kick off the three-day NAACP national conference, spanning May 15, 16, and 17, at the Marriot, in downtown Jackson.

Johnson said he is pleased to host this historic gathering. "The Mississippi State Conference of the NAACP has a responsibility to continue to uplift the legacy of Civil Rights heroes such as Medgar Evers. Bringing national attention to this historic occasion helps the next generation to understand the history so that our communities can continue to prosper. This is what Medgar Evers would've wanted."

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Founded in 1909, the NAACP is the nation's oldest and largest civil rights organization. Its members throughout the United States and the world are the premier advocates for civil rights in their communities, conducting voter mobilization and monitoring equal opportunity in the public and private sectors.